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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2789  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [MO](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)  
SUBJECT: WESTERN SAHARA: SAHRAWI CLAIMS POLISARIO HOLDS AN AMERICAN PRISONER

¶1. This cable is sensitive by unclassified. Please treat accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) Poloff recently met with Dahi Akai, President of the Association of Those Who Disappeared by the Polisario. Akai presented a letter in Arabic for the Secretary requesting assistance for an American allegedly held in a Polisario prison with Akai as late as 1980. Post has no information to substantiate Akai's claim of any American held by the Polisario, including from recently released Moroccan prisoners of war. Though we find the story odd, we forward it nevertheless to the attention of the Department.

¶3. (SBU) Begin Embassy translation of the letter:

I feel unable to enumerate the number of crimes that the Polisario committed against our own people. Madame Secretary, an America citizen by the name of Joseph who

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worked on the staff of the former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim's, is still missing. Mr. Joseph was one of my cell mates at one of the Polisario prisons, Prison al-Rachid, and he was subjected to torture and humiliation.

Madame Secretary, we send letters to all American delegations that come to visit us in Laayoune and we sent a letter to the US Embassy in Rabat on the same issue.

Madame Secretary, we have two requests. First, we ask you to continue looking for Mr. Joseph and address an official request to the Polisario leadership on the whereabouts of this American citizen. Second, we ask you to ban Mohammed Abdelaziz, the well known torturer and Secretary General of the Polisario and who, under the pretext of political work, committed humanitarian crimes and who is responsible for the disappearance of more than 800 Sahrawis in Polisario prisons, from visiting American territory or bring him before the international court of justice in accordance with resolutions of Amnesty International and in accordance with the democratic values of your great country.

Best Regards,

Dahi Akai

President of the Association  
Laayoune  
February 7, 2006

End Embassy translation of the letter.

¶4. (SBU) According to Akai, Joseph was adjacent to him in prison and told him he was an American. Akai also said that he had talked to other American diplomats in the past and had spoken to the Spanish concerning Joseph; however, he did not mention having discussed this case with the UN or having any contact with Americans looking for a missing person. Joseph could not speak French or Arabic and only some Spanish. In spite of this, the two men became friends and promised to help each other. Akai described their communication system as whispering through walls when guards were not nearby.

Physically, Joseph was a tall man and in his thirties according to Akai. He also said that there were many prisoners of different nationalities, including French and Spanish, held at one time by the Polisario. In 1980, Akai was released from prison and pledged to Joseph that he would fight for his release. When asked if anyone else had known Joseph in prison or seen him after 1980, Akai said he would discuss Joseph with other former prisoners in Laayoune and contact Poloff.

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Riley